

AIDS were positive for antibodies to HIV-I compared with only 1/27 wives of seronegative controls.<sup>2</sup> Another study undertaken in Kinshasa showed that of 3000 couples tested, in 80 cases the male partner was infected, and in only 20/80 (25%) cases were both spouses infected.<sup>3</sup> The high rate of infectivity in the first Zaïrian study was probably because all the men had AIDS, whereas in the second study, as well as in ours, the subjects were clinically healthy.<sup>1</sup>

The incidence of heterosexual transmission that we report in the present survey is higher than in wives of men infected through blood products. Several hypotheses may explain this finding. In Africa, chronic stimulation of the immune system is more common than in American heterosexuals, thus possibly increasing the number of target cells that the virus can infect.<sup>4</sup> More

specifically, the high prevalence of sexually transmitted diseases in Africa, particularly genital ulcers, may facilitate the transmission of HIV.<sup>1,5</sup> Finally, young African women may be more sexually active and thus at increased risk of infection.

This study highlights the need for prospective studies to assess more accurately the efficiency of heterosexual transmission of HIV and the possible role of cofactors in the spread of the disease.

Yours faithfully,

L Bélec  
A J Georges  
T Brogan  
G Steenman  
M C Georges-Courbot  
P M V Martin

Institut Pasteur de Bangui,  
BP 923, BANGUI, Central African Republic

## References

- 1 Padian NS. Heterosexual transmission of acquired immunodeficiency syndrome: international perspectives and national projections. *Rev Infect Dis* 1987;9:947-60.
- 2 Mann JM, Quinn TC, Francis H, *et al.* Prevalence of HTLV-III/LAV in household contacts of patients with confirmed AIDS and controls in Kinshasa, Zaire. *JAMA* 1986;256:721-4.
- 3 Africa: vaginal sex inefficient in transmitting HIV. *CDC Aids Weekly* 1988; April 4:4.
- 4 Quinn TC, Piot P, McCormick JB, *et al.* Serologic and immunologic studies in patients with AIDS in north America and Africa. The potential role of infectious agents as cofactors in human immunodeficiency virus infection. *JAMA* 1987;257:2617-21.
- 5 Kreiss JK, Koech D, Plummer FA, *et al.* AIDS virus infection in Nairobi prostitutes: spread of the epidemic to east Africa. *N Engl J Med* 1986;314:414-8.

## Notices

### First congress of the European Academy of Dermatology and Venereology

The first congress of the European Academy of Dermatology and Venereology, for continuing education, will be held on 25-28 September 1989.

Topics will include: AIDS and dermatologists, what's new in treatment, dermatological surgery, warts and viruses, cutaneous histopathology, cutaneous immunopathology, and contact dermatitis.

For further information, please contact Centro Servizio Segreteria, EADV, Via Lapini 1, 50136 Florence, Italy.

### Conference on vaccines for sexually transmitted diseases

A conference on vaccines for sexually transmitted diseases will be held on 5-7 April 1989 at Oxford University. It is sponsored by the journal, *Vaccine*, and the World Health Organisation.

For further information, please contact DE Cogan, Vaccines for Sexually Transmitted Diseases, Butterworth Scientific Ltd, PO Box 63, Westbury House, Bury Street, Guildford, Surrey, GU2 5BH (Tel. 0483 300966).

### 8th Meeting of the International Society for Sexually Transmitted Disease Research (ISSTD)

The 8th meeting of the ISSTD will be held on 10-13 September 1989 in Copenhagen, Denmark.

For further information please contact the meeting organisers: DIS Congress Service, Linde Allé 48, DK-2720 Vanløse, Copenhagen, Denmark or the scientific secretariat (Mrs Sandra Hyman), Statens Serum-institut, Neisseria Department, DK-2300 Copenhagen S, Denmark.

## Correction

### Detecting *Chlamydia trachomatis* by direct immunofluorescence using a Cytobrush sampling technique (August 1988;64:245-6)

We regret that an error occurred in the above paper. The second sentence of the first paragraph should have read:

"Direct immunofluorescence is adequately sensitive and specific compared with conventional culture."